Roxanne Eugene

Ms. Krafft

AML 2410, 8974

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Response Paper 4 on *White Noise* by Don Delillo

Don Delillo portrays the typical day to day life of a family in *White Nose.* However, one may say that the reoccurring events in *White Noise* are not common. From the beginning of this novel to chapter 21, the reader observe how Jack’s family and the Iron City citizens go through a range of mysterious events such as the school evacuation, the Treadwells’ disappearance, the near plane crash, and the airborne toxic event. As a family, it may be easier for one to survive these horrific events, but evidently if one does not have knowledge, these horrific events can lead to death. Don Delillo in *White Noise* shows how significant it is for one to have knowledge because this knowledge can help one overcome death or not fear death.

Jack’s role as a professor and chairman of Hitler studies reassures him that he is significant and a person of knowledge. When not with his family, he is often in the classroom teaching or acquiring more knowledge from his colleagues. Even the way he dress as a professor is of significance to him because it makes him feel powerful and it is that power that makes him not afraid to talk about death. For example, Jack is dressed in his professor attire along with his dark glasses when he enters Murray’s lecture on Elvis (70). Himself and Murray talk about death in a back in forth manner, comparing’s Hitler’s death with Elvis’s death and also how both Hitler and Elvis reacts to death themselves. This conversation indicate that they are two knowledgeable men and do not fear death. Don Delillo expresses how one’s ability to know information can help ease the thought of death. Jack also mentions at the end of this chapter that although people crowded, he did not need a crowd and he felt that he was on top of death because it was a professional matter (74).

Jack was not the only that inquired information but also his son Heinrich. Heinrich was the first one in the family to know about the airborne toxic event. Because of his knowledge, he was able to warn his family members about it. Being able to know about such a dangerous event is extremely important because that information is potential to save people from death. This knowledge that Heinrich had made him not feel worried, subdued, or confused as the rest of the family was, he found this event brilliantly stimulating (120). Heinrich knowledge also factors in to the fact that he was able to speak to the people in the evacuation camp. It is even stated that, “People moved in closer, impressed by the boy’s knowledgeability and wit” (127). He entertained these people and kept their mind off of death. Having the ability to not fear death is something that a lot of people find hard to do. In this novel, readers are able to see Jack’s constant struggle with the thought of death. However, having knowledge can alleviate this fear. People are then able to talk about death and not be afraid of its coming but know that it is something natural and that the knowledge behind it makes it easier to cope with it.

**Open ended question: How can one’s knowledge of a tragic event hinder or help a situation?**